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Staff Report

to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

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Through: Joe Nucci, Historic Preservation Officer (HPO)

HPC Neighborhood Meeting Date: February 9, 2006

Governor Pyle House Historic Property Designation

DSD Project Review #: HPO-2006.15 Ordinance #: ORD NO. 2006.18

Background / Status

An application for designation of the above-referenced property as a Tempe Historic Property and listing in the Tempe Historic Property Register was submitted by the property owner Ronald A. Davidoff through his representative Emilio LoCascio, Gemini Development Corporation. The application has been reviewed by the Historic Preservation Office and all requirements for notification, posting and advertisement, as set forth in Chapter 14A "Historic Preservation" of the Tempe City Code, have been met and a public hearing scheduled. Present zoning of the property for proposed designation is R-3R: Multi-Family Residential Restricted. The area is identified as a Cultural Resource Area in General Plan 2030. On January 13, 2006, the developer filed DSD case number SPR04202 for preliminary site plan review for the project known as the "Ash Street Condo Townhomes" to build seven residential condominiums and preserve the historic 1938 Governor Pyle House located at 1120 South Ash Avenue.

The following dates have been scheduled for the designation process.

HPC Public Hearing Date: March 9, 2006

RRC Public Hearing Date: March 21, 2006

Council 1 Public Hearing Date: April 20, 2006

Council 2 Public Hearing Date: May 4, 2006

History

The Governor Pyle House is significant as the former home of one of Arizona's governors. Governor Howard Pyle (1906-1987), a highly respected elder statesman and Arizona Governor from 1951-1955, was actively involved in several organizations associated with the growth and preservation of Tempe. Governor Pyle and his wife Lucile contracted in 1938 to have the home built. It remained their primary residence for 27 years.

During his years as a resident of Tempe Howard Pyle was involved in numerous community organizations and activities including; member of the Tempe City Council; member/secretary of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce; managed the Tempe Civic Club; member and past president of the Tempe Historical Society; and a founding member of Tempe St. Luke's Hospital.

Although Howard Pyle served two terms as Governor of Arizona, he had begun his career in advertising and as a program manager and vice-president of KTAR, the Phoenix radio station. He also had been an overseas correspondent in the Pacific during World War II.

Howard Pyle prepared a number of descriptive booklets for Tempe and received the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation for his role in the preservation of the Niels Petersen House and the 1888 Tempe Bakery Hackett House rehabilitation. Several buildings have been named in his honor including the chapel at Tempe St. Luke's Hospital and the Pyle Adult Center.

Howard Pyle received honorary doctorates from Arizona State University, Redlands University, Lebanon College, Bradley University, Chapman College, and the Detroit Institute of Technology. Howard Pyle received many honors and served a number of organizations or agencies; including honorary membership in the American Society of Safety Engineers (this is the highest award of the Society presented to a non-member); recipient of the Arthur Williams Memorial Award, presented by the World Safety Research Institute for his contributions to traffic safety; and White House contact for the President's Committee for Traffic Safety and keynoter for many of the committee meetings from 1955-59. The Arizona Chapter, National Safety Council calls it most prestigious award the Howard Pyle Award - named after Arizona's governor Howard Pyle for his lifetime dedication to the safety of others.

Howard Pyle served on numerous committees, councils and boards, including: as chairman, National advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, U.S. Department of Labor, 1971-73, and assisted in the development occupational health and safety policies; and chairman, Western Governors Conference, 1951-53, where he promoted and formed the present expanded national highway construction program. He was a popular and highly-sought speaker and profile writer.

The man who governed Arizona from 1951 to 1955 achieved national prominence in three careers: radio broadcaster and executive, political leader and as president of the National Safety Council. J. Howard Pyle became Arizona's first Republican governor in 20 years when he won an upset victory over Democrat Ana Frohmler in the 1950 general election. A man of high principles and superlative administrative skills, he worked effectively with his Democratic state legislature in a period of rapid Arizona growth.

Context

This home is located in the Park Tract subdivision of Tempe. The Park Tract was an earlier "suburban" subdivision that was platted in August of 1924. The Governor Pyle house was built after the height of construction in the Park Tract (1928 to 1930). Tempe had been experiencing a housing shortage for many years, and the Park Tract was designed to provide comfortable and modern family type housing. This home is an example of later infill construction in a developed area. Many lots had remained vacant from the original subdivision plat. During upswings in the economy, these lots were built on. The result is a mix of older and new houses in close proximity. Without the

connection to one of only two of Tempe's native sons to serve as governor, this property would be considered as contributing to an historic district.

Chronology

John Howard Pyle (1906-1987) born March 25, 1906 in Sheridan, Wyoming.

April 10, 1924 – Hugh E Laird and Fred J Joyce, on behalf of the Park Tract Trust organized in 1920, filed a plat for the Park Tract subdivision. Development of the subdivision began in the 1930s on 100 lots in the area roughly bound by 10th Street, Mill Avenue, 13th Street, and Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. The Park Tract Subdivision includes 79 properties surveyed in the Tempe MRA.

1925 – At the age of 19, Howard Pyle's father, a Baptist minister, moved the family from Texas to Tempe.

1930 – Howard Pyle became the best known voice in Arizona broadcasting. For 25 years he conducted Easter Sunrise services at the Grand Canyon, which were so popular that they were broadcast nationally on NBC.

1938 – Howard Pyle and his wife, Lucile Hanna Pyle, built their home at 1120 South Ash Avenue. They would own this home for the next 27 years.

1944 – Howard Pyle served as a war correspondent in the Pacific during World War II, and broadcast Japan's surrender from the USS Missouri.

1950 – Howard Pyle was drafted by the Republicans to run for governor in 1950. Under the management of his friend Barry Goldwater, his campaign had a surprise victory.

1951 – Governor Howard Pyle becomes Arizona's youngest governor.

1952 – Governor Howard Pyle elected to serve a second term as Arizona Governor. In the 1952 Presidential Election "I Like Ike" WWII Supreme Allied Commander Dwight David Eisenhower beat Illinois Democrat Adlai Stevenson in Arizona (58.4% to 41.7%) in the big Republican year of 1952 that saw the election of Barry Goldwater to the Senate, John Rhodes to Congress and Howard Pyle re-elected Governor by a wide margin.

1953 – Arizona Highway Patrol stages surprise raid on Short Creek, taking the polygamists to Kingman and the women and children to Phoenix where the latter were placed in foster homes. In a 1985 interview, Governor Pyle said he believed reaction to the raid had cost him the 1954 election. "When I die, I know I will be remembered for Short Creek far beyond anything else I did in office," he said.

1954 – Governor Howard Pyle defeated in his run for a third term as governor by Ernest McFarland.

1955 – Howard Pyle served as Deputy Assistant to President Eisenhower for federal-state relations in the White House directing policy and liaison in the field of federal-state-local government relations. He was primarily responsible for development of the work of the Joint Federal-State Action Committee for stronger, more responsible local government

1957 – Howard Pyle receives an honorary degree from Arizona State College at Tempe (ASU). Honorary degrees are an opportunity for universities to single out people who have made contributions to society. At ASU Honorary Degree recipients are nominated by faculty members.

1959 – Howard Pyle appointed as president of the National Safety Council where he served for 15 years. The National Safety Council was delighted that Mr. Pyle could accept an invitation to become its president, noting his background of public service and safety that fits him admirably for his responsibilities with the Council.

1973 – Howard Pyle appointed president emeritus of the National Safety Council. Now retired and living in Tempe, Pyle became deeply involved in community service. His newspaper column often brought the perspective of community history and historic preservation to his readers and, as he was also much in demand as a speaker, his message carried throughout the community.

1984 – Tempe St. Luke's Governors established by Tempe St. Luke's Hospital to address development needs for the expansion of hospital facilities named in honor of Governor Howard Pyle, one of the founding members.

1987 – **John Howard Pyle (1906-1987)** dies in Tempe, Sunday, December 1, 1987. He was 81 years old. He had been hospitalized since Oct. 23 after suffering a stroke.

Integrity

The Governor Pyle House retains all of the typical Ranch house features including steel casement windows and a low-pitch roof.

Significance

The Governor Pyle House is significant for its association with Governor Howard Pyle, governor of Arizona from 1951-1955, and a citizen of Tempe who contributed in many ways to both the growth and preservation of Tempe through his numerous civic activities as outlined above.

This property is also significant by association with the context of Community Planning and Development. It falls under the theme of housing - custom house. This building represents one of the larger Ranch houses in the neighborhood. It is very wide and shallow in size with most of its massing fronting onto the street. This is a typical feature of many Ranch style homes. Other typical features include steel casement windows and low-pitch roof. Mature landscaping frames much of the front facade view from the street.

Recommendation:

Historic Preservation Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the nomination and recommend to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council that the property be designated as a Tempe Historic Property.

REFERENCES:

Goff, John F. 1983 – Arizona Biographical Dictionary. Black Mountain Press. Cave Creek, AZ.

Myers, John L. (Ed.) 1989 – The Arizona Governors, 1912-1990, Heritage Publications, Phoenix, Ariz.

Pyle, Lucile Hanna 1987 – Oral History interview, OH-114: Lucile Hanna Pyle, 12 June 1987, with Jean Stengel. Tempe Historical Museum.

Rector, Pam 2006 – Draft/Governor Pyle House staff summary, Tempe Historic Preservation Office.

Ryden, Don 1997 – Tempe Multiple Resource Area Update, Tempe Historic Preservation Office.

Solliday, Scott 2001 – Tempe Post World War II Subdivision Study, Tempe Historic Preservation Office.

attachments: application
vicinity map
site plan
photographs
other